

## Minutes of Meeting

### SOCIAL & MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING Department of Social Services

January 23, 2012

Present: Roger Bradstreet, Town of Nelson  
Alexander Stepanski, Town of Stockbridge  
Lewis Carinci, City of Oneida  
Michael Fitzgerald, Commissioner  
John Becker, Chairman, Board of Supervisors  
Mark Scimone, Administrative Assistant to the Chairman  
James Goldstein, Town of Lebanon – arrived late

The Social and Mental Health Services Committee met in the Board of Supervisors large conference room. The meeting minutes from December 28, 2011, had previously been distributed. On a motion by Lewis and seconded by Alex, the meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

Mike reviewed the caseload and expenditures report. It was noted that this report was based on a cash basis, but overall, it showed expenses about \$3.2 million under budget for 2011. Medicaid and foster care were the primary reasons behind the underspending. Going into 2011, it had been determined to budget about half the increase expected so that when FMAP did end, the subsequent increases would not be as substantial. That led to a \$600,000 windfall for this past year, combined with the approximate cost savings of \$400,000 in foster care, for the two most significant drivers of savings. Mr. Becker remarked that any savings this past year would likely be “eaten up” by expenses going forward.

Mike had two resolutions before the committee. The first was a renewal of a contract with Office for the Aging for transportation services for Medicaid-eligible seniors. This was a no-increase contract, covered by 100 percent Medicaid funding. Mike noted that the rate is less than half of what is paid to other taxi companies for services and, all told, last year less than \$1,200 was paid for this service. On a motion by Alex and seconded by Lewis, the resolution passed unanimously.

The next resolution was for paid mentoring services with the Community Action Program (CAP). CAP provides two mentoring programs for Madison County youth – one that is all volunteers and the one funded by DSS that provides funding for kids who are at greater risk of foster care placements due to school attendance or as a result of negative behaviors at home, in the community, or at school. The paid mentoring program has been successful at increasing school attendance for 80 percent of the youth and raising academic performance for 90 percent of the youth. The contract is for the same amount as the previous year (\$136,129) and is paid out of 100 percent federal funds. On a motion by Lewis and seconded by Alex, the resolution passed unanimously.

Mike updated the committee that members of the community had recently gathered to discuss “legal phunk,” a manufactured, synthetic cannabinoid that is being sold legally in two locations within Madison County – City of Oneida and Village of Hamilton. Mike described the

substances as incense that is intended to be burned as a deodorizer; however, people are finding that smoking and inhaling this “phunk” causes them to “get high.” Unfortunately, it also causes extreme anxiety, feelings of helplessness, and for one Madison County teen, death. Law enforcement and emergency medical services have seen a rapid increase of incidents where they are called to respond as a result of a person using these substances. There is a desire on the part of legislative leaders to control and/or outlaw these products (there were no less than four bills last year in the Senate and Assembly), but the problem has become that as soon as one substance is outlawed, the manufacturers chemically change the compound, sometimes by as little as one molecule, and then it is again legal. Both Madison County establishments are very well versed on what is legal and only sell those products; however, the death occurred as a result of a former legal substance being smoked. Law enforcement, the medical community, and service providers want legislation and public education on these products. Since the legislation seems to be difficult, more will be forthcoming on the dangers these products present, including the death of the Madison County teen. Mike wanted the committee to be aware and help champion a public message to highlight the dangers associated with this legal phunk.

Finally, Dr. James Yonai and Mike updated the committee during a joint DSS and Mental Health department presentation on the success that the Mental Health Clinic, now in its fourth year, has been for DS and the Mental Health Department. Highlights include improved outcomes for families, a collaborative relationship between the departments, and a cost savings for the county.

There being no further discussion, the Mental Health Department began their presentation.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael A. Fitzgerald  
Commissioner

Approved by Committee Chairman: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_